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RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 0125
RUEHML/AMEMBASSY MANILA PRIORITY 0144
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO PRIORITY 0060
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0112
RUEHPG/AMEMBASSY PRAGUE PRIORITY 0138
RUEHPA/AMEMBASSY PRAIA PRIORITY 0223
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY 0156
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY 0304
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY 0384
RUEHSN/AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR PRIORITY 0045
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO PRIORITY 0103
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 0115
RUEHUM/AMEMBASSY ULAANBAATAR PRIORITY 0007
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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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DEPARTMENT FOR DRL, G, EUR/WE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PREL](#) [PO](#)

SUBJECT: PORTUGAL SEEKS REPLACEMENT LEADER FOR COMMUNITY OF
DEMOCRACIES WORKING GROUP

REF: A. STATE 19832

[1](#)B. LISBON 00217

THIS IS AN ACTION REQUEST. PLEASE SEE PARA 5 FOR DETAILS.

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: MFA Deputy Director General for Foreign Policy Antonio Ricoca Freire announced that, due to resource strains caused by Portugal's upcoming EU Council Presidency, Portugal would be stepping down as President of the Working Group for Inter-regional Cooperation in the Community of Democracies (CD). He requested that meeting participants consult with capitals and respond by March 23 with suggestions for a replacement or replacements to direct the group's work. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) As a follow-up to Portugal's request for input on future CD projects (ref B), MFA Deputy Director General for Foreign Policy Antonio Ricoca Freire hosted a meeting of several Community of Democracy (CD) missions in Lisbon. In addition to our suggestions involving the United Nations Democracy Caucus and outreach to Europe, Romania suggested approaching the Francophonie informally to see whether they might be interested in the CD. Romania is currently the Chair of the Francophonie and saw the overlap as an opportunity that could spark new interest by select member states. Ricoca Freire agreed with the proposal and asked Romania to begin informal talks.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Ricoca Freire then reported that Portugal plans to step down as the President of the Working Group for Inter-regional Cooperation, citing resource constraints from the upcoming EU Presidency. He underscored Portugal's commitment to the CD efforts, confirmed Portugal's plan to become Chair for the CD Convening Group once Mali steps down, but said Portugal simply could not handle the working group responsibilities in combination with its other obligations. This was the first mention that Portugal would be leaving its position on the working group. Chilean Ambassador to

Portugal, Francisco Perez-Walker, responded with surprise and assured Ricoca Freire that the group supported Portugal's work to date and wants to see Portugal continue in its role. Ricoca Freire acknowledged the support but stressed that Portugal has decided it cannot continue and is now seeking a nation or a group of nations willing to replace Portugal immediately, noting that the working group chairmanship required an "availability" that Portugal could not offer at this time.

¶4. (U) Ricoca Freire requested that the U.S., Chile, Peru, Romania, and the Ukraine consult with capitals to seek a response before March 23 so that Portugal can announce its departure and its replacement at the March 28 CD meeting in Bamako, Mali. He offered several suggestions including holding the meetings in Washington DC at member embassies, rotating the responsibilities between several capitals, calling on the co-presidents of the working group, or even keeping the working group meetings in Lisbon (although not at the MFA) for the time being. Portugal does not want to impose any conditions on the group's decision, according to Ricoca Freire.

¶5. (U) ACTION REQUEST: Post requests Department guidance on USG views for replacing Portugal as President of the CD working group. If possible, we would welcome guidance by March 22 to ensure that we can transmit our input before Portugal's announcement at the March 28 meeting in Bamako. End action request.
Hoffman